

BUILDING ON A RICKETY FOUNDATION: “AN EVANGELICAL AGENDA”

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During one of the meal adjournments from Synod 2001, the Revd Phillip Jensen addressed the Anglican Church League. It was a “missionary” address, titled “An Evangelical Agenda”.¹ He promoted “church-planting” and outlined a putative justification for his proposed strategy.

His address was notable for its sweeping generalisations and innuendo, eg about “revisionism” and the alleged evils of Tractarianism.

Putting to one side all matters of rhetorical technique, the logic of Mr Jensen’s address was that

- “the parish system” was working well;
- *until* the Tractarians damaged the parish system irreparably;
- *so* the remedy is to bypass existing parishes damaged by Tractarian and other revisions, and restore authentic Anglicanism.

He went further, concluding his address by urging ACL members to campaign so that the churches planted by those who have been forced outside the denomination (ie, by collateral damage to its theology and institutional structures) should be embraced as part of the Anglican family.

It is clear from his address that he is promoting competitive rather than collaborative church-planting. That is, this church-planting is not undertaken with the full knowledge and willing cooperation of an existing Anglican parish, but because the existing parish is judged to be defective and thus for the cause of the gospel should be challenged, exposed, and perhaps even extinguished.

I intend to show first that Mr Jensen’s proposal bristles with practical difficulties; and second, that it is based on a theologically prejudiced reading of history. Such a view of the past does not commend those who hold it as reliable guides for the future.

In the final section I set Mr Jensen’s address in the broader context of American fundamentalism (where the term “fundamentalism” is not intended to be in any way pejorative, but is used as a scholarly descriptor). It belongs to that milieu for its defensiveness, its militancy, and its separatist tendency. This is not to describe the Diocese of Sydney as “fundamentalist” – it is more complex and varied than that! – but to place one of the expressions of Sydney church life into its proper context.

Practical difficulties

No one who loves the Lord could object to promoting his gospel. In that sense, simple “church planting” is not an issue. It becomes an issue when it results from a deliberate strategy, allegedly based on theological principle, to move into an established “catchment area” (parish) of your denominational fellowship, to compete against and maybe extinguish that parish.

Obviously, no congregation is perfect in itself, nor necessarily fully capable of addressing all its local mission needs. Immaturity and lack of resources (for example) may disable and profoundly discourage some congregations. Other members of the denominational fellowship –congregations and parishes mature in spirit and rich in resources – should then support their beleaguered fellow Christians, and cooperate with them so that together they address the local mission needs more adequately.

Cooperation rather than competition is the appropriate response to this scenario. The element of competition in Mr Jensen’s church-planting strategy arises from his sense that the Anglican Church has been seduced away from its theological basis. The planted church will exemplify authentic Anglicanism, truly and clearly preach the authentic gospel of Christ, and restore correct doctrine, worship, ethics and discipleship. In theory, its success will show how sadly defective its neighbour is, and what a travesty of Anglicanism it is.

What will relationships between the existing parish and the church planted into its midst be like? If both describe themselves as “Anglican”, there will be confusion in the local community. A member of the existing parish, who answers the door to someone door knocking for the church plant and saying “I represent the local Anglican church”, could be hard pressed for a suitable response. If the implant does not have “Anglican” either in its title or its self-description (eg in its advertising or in the phone directory), it may avoid this confusion. This will be at the expense of appearing to the locals to be just another weird denomination or sect, certainly not mainstream.

Of course, some likely members of the implanted church will know what is going on. The initial market for the existing church plants may well be Sydney diocese emigrants, already well versed in the code that allows them to distinguish “true” Anglicanism from the “divergent” local variety.

Because its theological agenda is restorative, the implant will very carefully and conscientiously differentiate itself from the inadequate local Anglican parish. This will be carefully reinforced when opportunity requires or permits. It will be important for the implanted church to pre-empt any “drift” away towards the deficient parish. It will also be important for the implant to lure parishioners away from their place of “false” teaching, to their own fellowship where “authentic” Anglicanism is taught and practiced.

This dynamic can only continue for so long, until one of the following occurs: the local parish withers and dies; the implant withers and dies; or there is a crisis. In the last instance, the critical phase could be public and dramatic, or quiet and slow, but whatever happens it will effectively define relationships between both parties for the next generation. The implant may merge with the local Anglican parish into the host diocesan structure (and some of the rhetoric will moderate!). Or hostility may increase. Or maybe there will just be an uneasy truce ... in which the implant survives as a stand-alone protestant conventicle, prone to the schismatic disease that invariably infects all groups claiming exclusive access to established truth.

I expect that eventually the Evangelical church-planting will become self-vindicating and schismatic, along the lines of the following rather sad logic. Mr Jensen's proposal seems to arise from a strong sense of being betrayed by those who call themselves Anglicans; such pseudo-Anglicans now seem (to Evangelicals like Mr Jensen) to have gained the upper hand in the worldwide Anglican Communion; such Evangelicals therefore feel themselves "locked out" from their own denomination; they perceive their situation to be desperate - the gospel is at stake - and this seems to be the only way to rescue Anglicanism from its folly and bring the gospel to Australia. Some Evangelicals might dispute the catastrophic tone of this description - the February 2002 issue of *Southern Cross* carries a letter from an American evangelical to this effect - but this sense of desperation is palpable in some sectors of the Sydney Evangelical scene. The Evangelical church-planting agenda will become self-vindicating when the mainstream Anglican structure refuses to embrace it - which then proves that it deaf to truth, and a travesty of "true" Anglicanism (as the church-planters have maintained all along). For the sake of the gospel, the church-planters must stay away from the mainstream structure, and confront its apostasy by delivering the genuine article. The divisions therefore become rigidified and institutionalised, so that in 20 years time there will be a new denomination calling itself something like "The Evangelical Anglican Church". I imagine there will be no love lost between them and The Anglican Church of Australia.

Why should the split occur? The sting came in the tail of Mr Jensen's proposal, when he urged ACL members to campaign so that the churches planted by those who have been forced outside the denomination could be embraced as part of the Anglican family. How will that be done? Entry of the implant into the local diocesan structure will not be easy. Why would the implant want to merge, if its *raison d'être* is that the host diocese is spiritually errant and defective? Why would the host diocese accept the newcomers on the newcomers' terms? What will happen when someone actually attempts such a merger? This dynamic suggests that the host diocese is unlikely to welcome the implant with any enthusiasm; any diocesan resistance will of course be greeted with dismay and suspicion; and the church-planters' expectations will be fulfilled. From that position, it is a short path to the split, unless the implant seeks a home in the Anglican fold through the Diocese of Sydney, its diocese of origin.

A church plant may or may not seek any connection with the Anglican Church of Australia, this is a matter of its free choice. The process of affiliation assumes the exercise of that choice. There is no inherent need for a nascent Christian congregation, the harvest of faithful church-planting labours, to regard itself as an Anglican congregation, even if those who planted it regard themselves as Anglicans on a mission to rescue their denomination. Once those who plant the church set themselves outside the denominational structures, they establish new and distinct structures tailored to their own needs and purposes; and any re-admission to the Anglican structure will require negotiation on a case-by-case basis; and, for the reasons outlined above, such negotiations may not come to a satisfactory resolution. Again, the other option is to seek Sydney's embrace.

Because the current constitution of the Anglican Church of Australia defines dioceses territorially, the planted church (eg in one of the neighbouring dioceses of Newcastle, Bathurst, or Canberra and Goulburn) would require membership of its host diocese rather than Sydney. To bypass the host diocese and seek affiliation with the Diocese of Sydney would not only be unconstitutional, it would hardly help relationships within the Australian church. It is to be earnestly hoped that the Archbishop of the day refuses to go down that path.

I note Mr Jensen's proposal did not include a strategy for the eventual affiliation of the planted church into its host diocese, perhaps on the assumption that Sydney would be their eventual "home". To remain within the constitution, the church-planting process should nurture links with the host diocese right from the outset, with a frank declaration that the ultimate aim is affiliation of the implant. This is necessary for the transparency and integrity of the process. For those churches already planted into neighbouring dioceses, have there been robust consultations with their host dioceses, to advise them of their ultimate intention of being received into the Anglican fold? If not, such plantings have been in bad faith.

There are other reasons why the host diocese might resist. Let us look at two Anglican "markers", episcopal ordination and infant baptism. The current church plants have episcopally ordained clergy, but that need not continue. If the minister at the time was either appointed from a non-episcopal church tradition (eg Baptist), the diocese might want him (it is unlikely to be "her"!) episcopally ordained or replaced with someone episcopally ordained. Will the church plant take it upon itself to ordain one of its number as its minister? If so, the host diocese may again insist on episcopal ordination ... With respect to the second denominational marker, Phillip Jensen acknowledged infant baptism as such in his address - but that does not oblige any church planted under this proposal to practice it or approve it. Some practicing Anglicans have misgivings about infant baptism on theological principle. What if the host diocese insists upon willingness in principle to baptise appropriate infants, as a requirement for acceptance into the diocesan fellowship?

If the church plant is to have any prospect of success in integrating with the host diocese, it will therefore have to be conscientious in maintaining the Anglican markers as they are perceived by its host. Lay or diaconal eucharistic presidency, currently highly favoured in Sydney but illegal in the national church without a Canon of General Synod, if practiced in the church plant, will not endear the implant to its host!

Realistically, it is unlikely that an independent church plant could maintain the Anglican markers its host may require - instead, it will develop a life of its own without episcopal or other denominational supervision. Being independent, it will have the right to make its own decisions, and it is inconceivable that it would later renounce developments that it took in its own right. For this reason, the policy of planting independent churches is a direct attack on the integrity of Anglicanism.

Such are the foreseeable practical difficulties. Now to matters of theological and historical substance.

Historical and theological dimensions

I turn now to the historical and theological dimensions to Mr Jensen's address. He took a gratuitous swipe at "traditional Anglo Catholics [who resent] revisionist liberal bishops like Jack Spong when their whole movement was built on exactly the same kind of revisionism in the 19th century that they complain of happening to them in the twentieth. They taught the liberal Catholics how to transform a denomination, away from its theological basis – they should not be surprised that their own grandchildren have done it to them". It is a convenient starting point for historical and theological analysis of his "Evangelical Agenda".

It is clear from the quotation that he is not encouraging Evangelicals to break existing church laws about lay or diaconal eucharistic presidency, on the grounds that in their day the Tractarians successfully transformed the church's culture through (alleged) law-breaking. He may hold that view, but it does not emerge from a plain reading of the cited text. Mr Jensen's concern is rather with the transformation of a denomination "away from its theological basis" by "revisionism", a feat the Tractarians allegedly both attempted and achieved. I intend to show that his claim is ill informed and partisan; it is more symptomatic of the defensiveness of some Evangelicals than of historical and theological reality. This means his proposed Evangelical church-planting Agenda stands as a solution to a non-existent problem. It is necessary to ask whether such a skewed view of the past can generate a healthy and realistic future for the Evangelicals who subscribe to it and build their strategy on its foundation.

According to Mr Jensen, the Tractarians "reintroduced into the Anglican forms of church life sacerdotal markers (chasubles, perpetual lights, reservation of the sacraments, genuflexions, mass language, the *Agnus Dei*, etc)", which reintroduction created "no-go zones" in parish and diocesan life and eventually – so he claimed - "This was the destruction of the parish system".

The matters described as "sacerdotal markers" have more to do with the Ornaments Rubric and the Ritual Movement (the "Puseyites") than with the Tractarians. It will become necessary to deal briefly with the Ornaments Rubric, after the discussion of Tractarian theology.

The Revd Dr Peter Toon, an Evangelical then on the faculty of London's Oak Hill College, studied the initial influence of the Tractarians on Evangelical theology, 1833-1856.² Toon addressed a claim that Tractarianism could be described as a continuation or even a fulfilment of the earlier Evangelical Revival and Evangelical Movement. He had already acknowledged the surprisingly great area of agreement between Evangelicals and Tractarians (p203) but added:

To reject [the] claim is not to deny there were similar emphases in each movement – the quest for personal holiness and the desire to propagate the faith in city parish and heathen land – but it is to insist that the foundations of the two systems were not the same. Both held the doctrines of the creed but in terms of their differing systems what mattered was that for Evangelicals the individual sinner approached God directly through Jesus Christ the Mediator, in faith and prayer, while for Tractarians this direct route through Jesus Christ involved a detour through the visible Church with her apostolic ministry and efficacious sacraments. Thus for an Evangelical to become a Tractarian ... [required] a basic change of reference in the account of how a holy and loving God grants salvation to a needy sinner. (p209f)

There is merit in his criticism. I add three comments. One, there are many today who would describe themselves as moderate to high church rather than Evangelical (in the “party” sense), who would distance themselves from the Tractarian movement or at least from some of its excesses. And there were many at the time, too, such as William Palmer (of Worcester), who has been described as the foremost Tractarian theologian. He was a staunch High Churchman, strongly opposed both to Popery and Dissent; he saw the drift towards Rome and was scathing in denouncing it. He showed it was possible to be Tractarian without betraying Anglicanism.³ Second, some elements of Anglicanism have admittedly accepted the rituals and theology of the Tractarians and their Puseyite companions too uncritically. Third, Toon's criticism of Tractarianism as requiring “a detour through the visible Church with her apostolic ministry and efficacious sacraments” applies to *any* party within the church, including Evangelicals, once they dominate its institutional power structures and narrow “orthodoxy” to compliance with their preferred ideology. *Extra ecclesiam [meam] nulla salus* – “outside my church, there is no salvation”. We can see this in the Diocese of Sydney, which has a clericalism of Word to rival any Tractarian clericalism of Sacrament.⁴

What were the main issues between Evangelical and Tractarian? Newman's notorious Tract 90 sought to demonstrate that some of the doctrines and practices rejected by the Anglican Reformers were nevertheless compatible with the Thirty-nine Articles. It is generally cited as the touchstone of Tractarian deviation. But earlier Tracts had also argued positions causing similar concern for Evangelicals (then and now). Tract 75 - also by Newman - reprinted selections from the Roman Breviary for private use as a supplement to BCP Offices. Tract 80 (by Isaac Williams) contained a veiled attack on the way the Atonement of Christ was presented in Evangelicalism. I can therefore understand something of Mr Jensen's concern that the Tractarians had at least the potential to transform the Anglican Church “away from its theological basis” by such “revisionism”.

But the main issues raised by Tractarian theology, as Toon identified them, are:

- how far is Scripture the sole authority in matters of faith (and to what extent should it be supplemented and interpreted by the tradition of the Church?);
- how far should justification by grace through faith – the primary doctrinal issue of the Reformation – be regarded as the accepted doctrine of the Church of England (and therefore of Anglicanism);
- the nature of the Church and its ministry, including apostolic succession;
- baptismal regeneration; and
- the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist.

I would add to this list the question of the Church's relationships to the citizenry and to the organs of government (Crown, Parliament etc). This was to be an issue of significance in colonial Australia, between the Evangelical Bishop Barker and the Tractarian Bishop Tyrrell.

Two things are particularly striking about the (expanded) list. First, none is new to Anglican theological debate. They were debated at the Reformation and in the centuries before the Tractarians, and will continue to be debated. This can be confirmed through any competent study of Anglican thought of the period from Henry VIII to Victoria.⁵ What was maybe new about the Tractarians was the energy, persuasiveness and authority they brought to their treatment of these matters. [It has often been noted that their teaching might on justification might have been more broadly acceptable if they had only known and understood more of Martin Luther!]

The second striking feature of this list is its theological substance, which is in marked contrast to Phillip Jensen's' theological superficiality. He had been troubled by the "sacerdotal markers", such as what the clergyman wore and how the sanctuary was arranged. Mr Jensen's complaints fall more under the auspices of the "Ornaments Rubric" than serious theology.

Why the discrepancy between Toon's analysis and Phillip Jensen's charges? Toon's list is by no means idiosyncratic, because each issue he named had either been addressed directly in individual Tracts (eg Church and Crown in Tract 1 by Newman; the role of Christian tradition in Tracts 80 and 87 by Isaac Williams, etc), or in other Tractarian writings (eg Newman's 1838 *Lectures on Justification*; William Palmer's 1843 *Treatise on the Church of Christ*), or in the contemporary debates they provoked (the celebrated Gorham Case centred on baptismal regeneration: Diocese of Exeter, 1847-1852). Two possible explanations come to mind. One, Mr Jensen was unaware of the relevant theological issues; or two, he was aware of them and assumed his hearers were similarly well informed about them. If the latter, why did he not maximise his argument's effect by focusing on the theological issues, rather than mere matters of rubric? He has strained at a gnat, and swallowed a camel. I believe he was assuming ignorance, and relying on stereotypes to trigger the expected response from his ACL audience. This is mere partisanship.

It is now time to turn to the Ornaments Rubric to Morning and Evening Prayer.⁶ Its 1662 version expanded its 1559 precursor (which had apparently been inserted during the House of Lords debate on Elizabeth's Prayer Book). It is notoriously imprecise, and its imprecision dates from 1559. The 1662 text reads:

And here is to be noted, that such ornaments of the Church, and of the ministers thereof at all times of their ministration, shall be retained, and be in use, as were in this Church of England by the authority of Parliament in the second year of the reign of King Edward VI.

The application of the Ornaments Rubric is uncertain because Edward's first Book of Common Prayer (1549) passed through Parliament during "the second year" of his reign, changing the usage of ornaments etc. The Rubric may therefore be construed as authorising the full medieval range of vestures and furnishings; or as authorising only those vestures and furnishings mentioned in the 1549 book. In either case, alb and chasuble were permitted. The Elizabethan *Act of Uniformity* (reprinted in the standard edition of the 1662 BCP) provided a fallback position for those opposed to alb and chasuble, because its penultimate paragraph incorporated the Rubric but with the addition "until other order shall be therein taken by the authority of the Queen's Majesty, with the advice of her commissioners ... or of the Metropolitan of this realm". Did (Metropolitan) Archbishop Matthew Parker's *Advertisements* of 1566, which enforced only the surplice, constitute the taking of an order "by authority of the Queen's Majesty"? Since the Rubric was reprinted in the 1604 Book, and remained unchanged into the 1662 Book, did its survival render Parker's *Advertisements* of no effect? These questions were the subject of intense partisan research, both historical and legal. Eventually, the whole process ground to a bitter stalemate, after nineteenth century legal judgments favoured first one side, then the other, and even the 1867 Royal Commission on Ritual proved inconclusive. The *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* concluded sadly: "The whole question seems too complex to permit of any certain solution".⁷

I have given some of the detail here to show that the use of what Mr Jensen described as "sacerdotal markers" in the Anglican Church (at least in the Church of England) is more than defensible on grounds other than Tractarian excess. It is true that Pusey and others imparted a particularly Tractarian flavour to many of the ritual "novelties" and "excesses" of the nineteenth century. It is similarly true that many people in today's Anglican Communion would conscientiously distance themselves from much of the distinctive Tractarian teaching but nevertheless accept (and value!) Pusey-style ceremonial.

Mr Jensen and Sydney conservative Evangelicals generally seem more concerned to continue the ritual battles of Victorian England than to recognise that the Church has tested the Tractarian movement, discarded its dross and kept what was valuable, and moved on. The charitable wisdom of the nineteenth century Bishop H C G Moule is worth recalling in this context, because he as an evangelical found some reforming value in Tractarianism.

Moule said:

With all readiness I admit that [the Tractarian] epoch and its results brought contributions of good to English Christianity. An exaggeration is sometimes used to correct its opposite, and the extreme prominence given by the Tractarians to the sacraments and the corporate idea and to the greatness of worship had a work to do and in that way did it. But this cannot overcome in me the conviction that the root principles of the Oxford Movement were widely other than those of the Reformation and out of scale with the authentic theology of the Scriptures ... [quoted by Toon, p210]

In other words, the Tractarians contributed to the total life of the Church, even though their foundation was found to be flawed. By contrast to Moule, as long as Mr Jensen fulminates against Tractarians for their “sacerdotal markers” as destroying the parish system (*Paradise Lost*), which can only be restored by church-planting (*Paradise Regained*), he makes himself a partisan and somewhat pathetic hostage to the *Ornaments Rubric*.

The hard truth of the matter is that both nineteenth and twentieth centuries brought changes that irreversibly transformed theology and parish life forever. Would the English parish system have survived intact to this day, if the Tractarians had not reintroduced their “sacerdotal markers”? No. The parish system of 2002 bears only a nominal resemblance to that of 1802, for reasons far removed from Tractarianism. Some of the dramatic changes were consequences of nineteenth century improvements in road and rail transport - improvements which accelerated into the twentieth century. Contemporary mobility now makes it possible for congregations to gather from all over Sydney to worship in their language of choice; such congregations may become “recognised churches” (by reason of their linguistic distinctiveness) under the *Recognised Churches Ordinance*. Does this represent a similar “breakdown” of the parish system, when people cross “boundaries” and where there may be two (or more) Anglican “parishes” within the one suburb or territorial unit?

After all, the parish is more a sociological than a theological unit, and therefore subject to cultural, political, economic and other social movements. Diversities of theology and churchmanship are not the only pressures for change, and it is nonsense to suggest that a single movement such as Tractarianism could have had the result Mr Jensen attributes to it.

For example, it is a simple human reality that Christians can will and do travel to or away from their “home parish” to worship, for reasons of taste or affection (eg, for preferred music style or preaching style; or because their children are “best friends” with children in the other parish; etc). These are legitimate human needs, whose satisfaction (or frustration) can have a profound bearing on the quality and joy of spiritual life and the Christian’s ability to persist in discipleship

Mr Jensen's charges about the alleged destruction of the parish system as the bearer of an assumed pure Anglican theological foundation cannot stand up against even a superficial knowledge of Victorian church history. Mr Jensen's charge against the Tractarians could equally be levelled against the Christian Socialists (F D Maurice, Charles Kingsley), for example, so his choice of "demon" is extremely selective. On the broader canvas of international Christian thought, and more far-reaching in their effects, were the rise of historical-critical Biblical scholarship, the debate about evolution and creation, and the rise of modernism. This debate appears nowhere in Mr Jensen's address, except in a throw-away comment about "revisionism".

Sadly, if this is the best foundation Mr Jensen can lay for his Evangelical Agenda, he is building on rickety foundations indeed. Also, it must be said, building a wing that in fact imperils the whole structure.

A broader perspective

It will be helpful to put Mr Jensen's church-planting proposal and his comments about the evils of "revisionism" into a broader context.

Dr Toon observed that the "defensiveness" of Evangelicals after the Tractarian movement was reinforced by circumstances beyond their control, namely the emerging challenge posed by the detailed literary and historical study of the biblical texts (p207). "Higher criticism" (as it came to be known) raised questions and unsettled interpretations that had traditionally been accepted without question. In the US, the doctrine of "biblical inerrancy" came to be a touchstone of orthodoxy for some evangelicals.

The American evangelical and fundamentalist scenario, as described by George Marsden, is generally illuminating here.⁸ Admittedly there are significant differences between evangelicalism in America and in both England and Australia; also between evangelicalism as a multi-denominational movement and an evangelical stream within a single denomination. Nevertheless, some of Marsden's insights prove helpful for understanding Mr Jensen's attitude to "revisionism". In Marsden's terms, Mr Jensen's address is "fundamentalist". I emphasise that I am using this term in a scholarly fashion - neither for polemic nor stereotyping, but as a useful instrument for classification.

In the fifty years following the Civil War, American Protestantism began to split into two camps, liberals and conservatives. In Marsden's account (pp32-46), protestant liberalism stressed the importance of history, emphasised morality as the essence of religion, and focused on the significance of religious feelings instead of doctrine. For its part, the evangelical movement embraced (pre-millennial) dispensationalism, the holiness movement, and Pentecostalism. Marsden identified a fascinating parallelism: dispensationalists and liberals both took history seriously, with the dispensationalists wanting to interpret history by means of the Bible (p41); the holiness movement took morality as seriously as the liberals, but insisted that only God brought true righteousness (pp41f); the liberals were attached to romanticism, where Pentecostals emphasised the role of God-given religious feelings in religious experience (p43).

This parallelism, fascinating as it is, shows that evangelicals perceived the issue to be one of defending revelation against the perceived dilution, contamination, erosion or dissolution of divine authority by secular reasoning. They responded defensively. In terms of emphasis, evangelicals gave absolute priority to revelation over reason, while liberals in contrast tended to give absolute priority to reason over revelation. The evangelical refuge in revelation preserved the vital insights that God's ways and wisdom transcend those of humanity (Isa 55.8-9), contradicting human wisdom and exposing its *hybris* (Mt 11.25-27, 1 Cor 1.18-25, etc). This is an important and persistent strand of the biblical witness, which evangelicalism was rightly eager to defend.

Interdenominational American evangelicalism then developed in two ways: one was able to develop confidently and adapt to the new learning without compromise to its evangelical heritage; the other was more defensive against reason (ie viewing the question as “choose *between* reason or revelation”). The latter path led to “fundamentalism”. Marsden (p1) defined “an American fundamentalist” as an evangelical “militant in opposition to liberal theology in the churches or to changes in cultural values or mores, such as those associated with ‘secular humanism’”. Fundamentalists are religious conservatives “who are willing to take a stand and to fight”.

The relationship to Mr Jensen's defensiveness about “revisionism” is clear. Any "revisionism" denies the absoluteness of God's timeless revelation, and must therefore be vigorously opposed. The sad feature of this type of response is that evangelicalism (including Sydney Anglican Evangelicalism) has no inherent need to be defensive, as generations of non-fundamentalist evangelicals have shown.

The actual practice of theology (including contemporary evangelical theology) shows perforce that Christianity admits a wide range of responses to the question of how reason and revelation relate. It is not a rigid dichotomy. The Chalcedonian Definition (451 AD, on the “two natures” of Jesus) and the classical doctrine of the Trinity epitomise the godly use of human reason to probe the given revelation, discern its underlying structure, internal coherence, consistency with Christian belief and experience, and its implications for belief and conduct. Every time an evangelical ponders what to make of divergent accounts in the gospels of apparently similar incidents (eg the feedings of four and five thousand), or tries to coordinate Luke's account of Paul's immediate post-conversion activities (Acts 9) with those of Paul himself (Gal 1), the human capacity of reason has already come into play by asking the question, let alone working towards its answer. Today's evangelical commentaries routinely survey matters of cultural context, archaeological evidence, and genre, without betraying their heritage but confidently maintaining their evangelicalism in the light of what these scholarly methods.

Human reason, therefore, is not inherently inimical to God's revealed truth and indeed may help believers to apprehend and appropriate it. Fundamentalist suspicion of reason *per se* is a defensive over-reaction provoked by its opposite extreme, over-confidence in human reason. Mr Jensen's hostility to “revisionism” does not differentiate theologically between free-range liberalism, and those who devoutly wish to use scholarship and reason while remaining within Scriptural, Trinitarian and Chalcedonian orthodoxy, ie to maintain “classical Christianity”. To that extent, Mr Jensen's response is theologically deficient.

Earlier, I noted some of the practical implications of Mr Jensen's church-planting agenda, and described it as "a direct attack on the integrity of Anglicanism". Maybe history is inclined to repeat itself, after all: American fundamentalists were divided over their relationship to denominations. This eventually constituted a fault line in the fundamentalist movement (see Marsden, pp66ff). Will church-planting separatism become a test of faith for Mr Jensen's version of Anglican orthodoxy?

Conclusion

There is a way forward, if more moderate Anglicans show they stand broadly within "classical Christianity", and eschew the wilder excesses of liberalism; and if those ideologically committed to Mr Jensen's sectarian church-planting "Evangelical Agenda" are able to acknowledge the *bona fides* of such Anglicans. This will be progress! As well, the Agenda's militant defensiveness must be named for what it is, and confronted both graciously and honestly.

We cannot allow Mr Jensen's church-planting proposal to run its self-vindicating and destructive course. Whatever its intent, it will have the effect of plunging us headlong into tensions and divisions which will be all the more bitter because they are avoidable.

His agenda is built of straw, on a foundation of theological twigs. This house should not stand.

¹ www.acl.asn.au/pdj_dinner2001.html

² *Evangelical Theology 1833-1856*. London: Marshall Morgan & Scott 1979

³ For detail see Avis, *Anglicanism and the Christian Church*. Edinburgh, T&T Clark, 1989, esp 175-182.

⁴ The alleged "clericalism of Word" is shown in the notion that anyone without a theological degree from a "sound" college cannot really be trusted as a preacher, while in practice most lay people are unable to acquire degree-level theological education at a "sound" college like Moore. This is *de facto* clericalism, because the laity is kept dependent on the clergy for "sound" and "reliable" Biblical interpretation.

⁵ Eg Avis, *Anglicanism and the Christian Church*.

⁶ The following is based on G J Cuming, *A History of Anglican Liturgy*, London: Macmillan 1969.

⁷ Art. "Ornaments Rubric". *ODCC*, 2 edn, ed F L Cross and E A Livingstone. London, OUP, 1974.

⁸ George M Marsden. *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*. Grand Rapids, Michigan. William B Eerdmans, 1991.